



HEIRS

Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society

n e w s l e t t e r



Messages from beyond...

In this issue we're exploring HEIRS' resources to help you expand your knowledge of those ancestors who lived, loved and died in & around Essex County.

The focus is local burial sites: from family farms, to church yards, to formal cemeteries & how the gravestone materials evolved & influence their readability even today. We even have tips to take good gravestone photos. Their epitaphs are messages from beyond that convey how their friends and family remember them.

HEIRS' own records and the value they offer our members for their family research, can be discovered through the headstone transcriptions, obituaries, & other physical files at our Resource Centre, and with our Ancestry.ca & Newspapers.com access.

Helping members discover more about their their ancestors' lives is our goal in this edition, whether you're local, or live further afield.

Take advantage of our free member resources.

Did you know?

In the 1897 Spring catalog, Sears began offering cemetery-related products for sale.

In their 1900 Fall catalog, small simple 2-piece marble markers started at about \$5 & ranged to the fairly large 3-piece pillar monuments for \$27.

It also noted that 2-6 cents per carved letter for inscription work was extra.

By 1902, they offered an entire Memorial Department in a separate flyer. Interestingly, Sears Roebuck sold cemetery monuments in their general catalog up until their 1949 issue.

And of course...

Today you can order stones from the online giants – for people & pets!





HEIRS Updates...

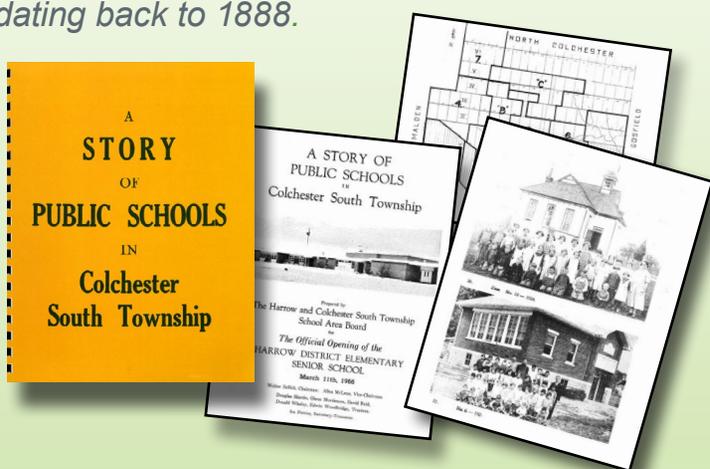
- by Lorrie Stephenson, President, HEIRS

A gift that keeps on giving!

An original, unbound master copy of 'A Story of Public Schools in Colchester South Township', which belonged to the late Mark Ward, was donated by his wife Suzanne. Her late father Cecil McKenzie Sr. was acknowledged in the book for his assistance.

Our own Edith Woodbridge & husband Edwin (a school trustee) were thanked for their special work on its original preparation.

The book was prepared by the Harrow and Colchester South Township School Area Board, for the Official Opening of the Harrow District Elementary Senior School back in 1966. This sought-after book not only contains a history of the Colchester South school system from earliest times, but regional school district maps, and importantly... school class photos with student names, dating back to 1888.



With approval, HEIRS can now offer bound, printed copies of this 68-page original for \$20 each.

April Meeting: Thursday, April 27th 1:30PM



The Lonesome Road:
The History of Settlement in the Northeast Corner of Colchester Township

"Before it was a town, before it was a village, before the Canada Southern Railway became the defining landmark of a small settlement called Essex Centre, there was a primitive road following a high ridge through the middle of Essex County."

'The Rising Village' begins on that high ridge in the northeast corner of Colchester Township.

Join us at our **first general meeting of 2023!**

Learn more about the early settlers of Talbot Road West and their place in Colchester Township's history. Laurie Brett will present "Essex: The Rising Village".

Copies are now available for sale at our Resource Centre.
See you there!

DUES are DUE

Membership renewals are due on April 30th.
(For members who've paid in advance, thank you!)

Renew by e-transfer or snail mail.

(See last page for contact details).

Thank you for supporting HEIRS!



Donations...

- by Lorrie Stephenson, President, HEIRS

Items big & small are offered to HEIRS frequently.

We're trusted to preserve, handle, & store them appropriately for future reference. It's easy to say yes to a donor, if the item is local in nature, an historical artifact, or just a lovely sentimental piece.

We've recently accepted this donation for our files.

"Mrs. Abbott, please come to the HEIRS office."

Almost every person that went to Harrow Jr. or Harrow P.S. since the 1970s will recognize the name Mrs Abbott.

Lucy Abbott was awarded the GECDSDB Outstanding Service Award in 2011 for her 35-year career as school secretary. She was one of the first people I met upon arriving at Harrow from the great metropolis of Windsor. Entering the quaint Junior School for the first time was akin to entering a fairytale land – and Mrs. Abbott guided us all.



As always, I was more than happy to see her in our Resource Centre recently, and with an envelope full of clippings that her mother collected over the years.

She has donated them for our local news files. But in the middle of the stack of clippings was in fact, an article highlighting her outstanding service award, 12 years ago!

Thanks for your continued support of our community, Mrs. Abbott!

Updated Cemeteries Map



- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Old Iler, Baptist | 7 Colchester Memorial | 13 Harrow, B.M.E. |
| 2 New Iler, Baptist | 8 Hutchins | 14 Methodist (Church) |
| 3 Toffemire/Snyder | 9 St. Mark's, A.M.E. Zion | 15 Ferriss |
| 4 Hoffman/Huffman | 10 Quick | 16 Central Grove, A.M.E. |
| 5 Christ Church, Anglican | 11 McCormick | 17 Gilgal, B.M.E. |
| 6 Erie, Methodist | 12 Baptist | |

An updated, inclusive map of local cemeteries is in the works at HEIRS.

For those needing to locate specific cemeteries, or to plan the best pathway to visit several sites in one trip, this new version will be extremely useful.

The cemetery's name, street location and GPS coordinates, with a brief site description will be detailed on the reverse.

Please Note:

Some older homestead sites require permission prior to entering these private properties. We're working to identify these sites in the descriptions.

COPIES WILL SOON BE AVAILABLE BY:

Email request to our Resource Centre

In person at our Resource Centre

By download from the HEIRS.ca website



Honouring our dearly departed...

- by Rick McCormick, HEIRS Member

Burying grounds were an important part of every early town. If not located on the family homestead, they were often placed near a church, meeting house, or green space.

In fact, the term graveyard itself was traditionally used for those burial grounds located next to churches. The term cemetery is derived from a Greek word meaning, 'sleeping' or 'resting place'. The local landscape and the availability of valuable land influenced the location of cemeteries in the past. Hilly terrains were often selected, being more difficult on which to farm and build. Similarly, rocky locations were chosen, although much more labour-intensive for the gravediggers.

When urban church & local graveyards were filled, planned burial locations were intentionally situated away from population centers... on the outskirts or in the suburbs to allow surveying & selling of family plots in advance of need.

Early settlers had no professional stone workers to hire. During the 1700s, gravestones were smaller in size, and created from softer types of stone – easier to quarry, shape and carve. The primary style was termed a tablet stone, being a single piece of cut stone, placed upright with about one-third of its mass buried underground for support. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, gravestone carving was not a full-time occupation, being too sporadic to earn a good living. Many carvers worked as masons, carpenters, or farmers.

What's in a name? Grave markers serve as our physical remembrances to commemorate the lives of those who have passed. Providing support for those left behind, the markers take on more importance as time passes, for the generations of families & friends to come.

Grave marker, gravestone, tombstone, headstone, memorial stone, monument – which one to use?

A **grave marker** is any object, made from any type of material. Early settlers, traveling great distances in search of land to build their new homesteads, buried loved ones who may have passed away on the journey. They used a stack of rocks or simple wooden crosses crafted from branches to mark the sites. Larger field stones, some with names or initials scratched on them were also used. Today, the term grave marker is used for any upright stone with an inscription.

Originally, **gravestones** were very large, stone slabs laid flat on the ground to cover the entire grave itself. Today, the term gravestone is synonymous with the use of the terms headstone or tombstone.

A **tombstone**, derived from Greek words meaning 'burial mound' & 'pebbles', was originally a large stone laid across to cover the cement-like casket, used back then. Tombstone was the most widely-used term in books since the 1700s, up until the last few decades. Today, grave, tomb, or headstones can be interchanged.

A **headstone** was a synonym for the construction cornerstone of buildings. Headstone is the common term for any marker located at the head end of burial plots. Contrastly, footstones often have engraved initials or the words son, daughter, mother or father.

A **memorial stone** is an overall term for a 'mounted marker'; for example; to show names of fallen soldiers or victims of a disaster and are usually used for groups of people. Today, it indicates a popular two-piece stone marker (a base with an upright, inscripted stone).

A **monument** is the term used when a burial site or memorial is significant in size, with inscriptions of names, dates, epitaphs, carved decorations, sculptures & other types of adornments. Think the War of 1812 Monument in Ottawa or Brock's Monument in Queenston, Ontario.



Gravestones Materials

- weathering the storm(s) to preserve our memories

In earliest times, moving stone that weighed 150+ pounds per cubic foot was difficult, time-consuming & costly. Gravestone carvers used whatever stone material was locally available, but it had to be soft enough to split and carve with hand-tools, yet durable enough to resist erosion.

Slate High-quality slate stone was easy to carve and very durable against weathering. By the middle 1700s, once-simple stone inscriptions flourished into beautiful, ornately-shaped and carved headstones.

Sandstone Sandstone forms when fresh water bodies dry up and sand grains cement together with other minerals into a matrix. With enough underground pressure and long geological timeframes, this 'sand mix' becomes stone. Higher silicate content provides a stronger stone; more clay content creates weaker, less durable stone. Brownstone, is just one variation, with a more naturally-coloured brown component.

Limestone Formed similarly to sandstone, it's made from dried up, salt-water bodies over time. As a sedimentary rock, it's crushed sea-shells provides a softer, easily-carved stone, but has proven to be much less durable than other materials. The surface crystallizes over time, crumbling easily when handled or in inclement weather, making cleaning and restoration work troublesome, especially affecting the legibility of its text.

Marble During the 1800s, marble manufacturers claimed it to be THE permanent building material of choice – 'never weathering, standing the test of time' they claimed. For much of the 1800s, marble surpassed all other types for gravestones. Marble is mainly calcium carbonate, formed when limestone undergoes tremendous heat and more pressure underground for thousands of years. With its long formation process, marble is known as a metamorphic type of rock.

The biggest issue with marble is its inability to resist acids, such as acid rain, which was not an environmental concern back when marble was first touted for gravestone use.

Though very expensive and 'requested' by affluent families of the day, many inscriptions on marble tombstone have faded into obscurity today. Marble was popular in the 1870s, as the U.S. government chose that material for the Civil War soldiers' headstones – even later on, for the losing side too.

The industrial revolution created advances in technology that made stone quarrying & stone cutting faster, and less costly. Starting with steam power & later followed by electricity, these advances allowed quick, less-laborious sawing & machine-finishing of large blocks of stone into memorials.

Granite Both granite and marble were actively quarried in the 1800s. Granite being much harder than marble is mostly comprised of mica, quartz & feldspar. Granite initially was very difficult to cut & finish due to its hardness and uneven grain. In reality, it was more chipped away than actually 'carved'. This fact delayed its ascent as the gravestone material of choice. By the late 1800s though, its usage increased dramatically for large, simple stones and obelisks, both needing less detailed carving.

The 1877 invention & equipment design for sandblasting enhanced engraving of both marble & granite stone, within a mere two decades of its first commercial release.

By 1900, environmental factors negatively effected marble stones, with their engraved lettering becoming difficult to read. Granite became more popular for monuments with its various shades, colors, glossy shine & improved durability. New technologies of laser-etching & carving, lowered both cost & turnaround time. Advanced capabilities today allow photos, copious text, special stone shaping, plus a myriad of special adornments to honour our loved ones.

For family history buffs, visiting their ancestor's gravesite but being unable to read their stone is heartbreaking. That's where older transcriptions files & photo archives can help complete your missing pieces.



HEIRS Records... mining for gold!

- compiled by Pauline Baldwin & Lorrie Stephenson, HEIRS

Rockpiles, Overgrowth & Snakes...

That's the condition described by former Harrow DHS student Harold Rayner, when he and some fellow students fulfilled an Essex County Review, summer work program back in 1972 & 1973.

The program, headed by the late Gerry Pouget who taught local history at the school, tasked students to find, clean, collect & collate data from all the tombstones in 17 cemeteries across Colchester South and the Town of Harrow, some 2200 burial graves at the time. The students worked as a single team at each site. Loads of field stones had been tossed upon the burial sites over time. They had to be moved 1st, then with steel rods & brushes they gently probed the entire site for buried gravestones. Markers were made upright, gently cleaned non-invasively, and inscriptions transcribed; many were photographed. At the end of the program, a final copy of their summer efforts was provided to HEIRS.

With many gravestones made from soft limestone, some transcriptions even back then were difficult to assess. Today, many of these same stones have unreadable lettering and designs – lost over time. Due to the program & the students back in the 1970s, records of those gravestones are preserved and live on today.

27 feet high?

HEIRS houses the efforts of the late Dorothy LaMarsh Zak, co-author of the Quick Family History book that was noted at our 50th anniversary gathering. From the 1950s -1980s, Dorothy traveled to almost all cemeteries of Colchester S., Harrow, Kingsville, Leamington & even a few in Kent County. There she placed the gravestones' information into her notebook, later transferring the data onto 3 x 5 index cards, along with family links & her personal notations on each one. HEIRS acquired these cards in 1987, which if stacked – would be 27 feet tall.

We have some 50 volumes of books on each cemetery, comprised of records with photos. As well, there's birth, marriage & death records on microfilm, a copy from McMaster University, through Hamilton OGS, from 1874-1875 with ties to local families. One obit was even found for a U.S. Civil War prisoner of war, formerly from our region.

Adding to these files, are records of obituaries from local funeral homes, dating back to 1945. Finding all kinds of records through our [Ancestry.ca](#) & [Newspapers.com](#) access at the Resource Centre, can enhance your searches.



Photos taken in the 1970s & 2023 show the effects of weather damage & the importance of records.

When visiting us here in Harrow, and for those who love to see physical records, our preserved documents will help you discover more details about your family members who called our region home. **Do you have records to share with us? Contact our Resource Centre or why not come visit us?**

How **NOT** to photograph gravestones...

(trust me, I've done all of these!) - by Rick McCormick, HEIRS member

So... you've finally found some time to take those gravestone photos you've always wanted. Here's some 'personal advice' on what not to do...

Grab your camera, and head out. Nope, don't do this. Capturing good photos... not just simple snapshots, takes a bit of planning.

You're "el lobo solo". Don't go it alone unless you really, really have to do so. Another set of eyes & hands always work better. You need to bring some items along, and it's inherently safer not to work alone.

It's now or never. Timing is everything. Just because it's convenient for you right now, it may not be the best time of day for photos. Traditionally, stone inscriptions face east... to 'greet the new day'. In Ontario, that means late morning light falling across the stone's face to effectively see inscriptions on older stones. Not all stones face east though; maybe it specifically faces a lovely view or the old family homestead.

Facing west: Middle of the day is best to avoid backlighting the stone, which just sends its inscribed face into shadow.

Facing north or south: Afternoon (2- 4:30PM works well most days).

Note: Branches = dapple lighting; tough to capture readable images. Bright overcast days work well for most stones; no harsh shadows.

Grab your camera & head out (part deux). Again... nope. Plan ahead as you need more than your enthusiasm & camera. Expecting gravestones to be pristine without weed overgrowth or bird droppings? **You're a real optimist.** You have two hands, your helper has two, so load these following items into a convenient knapsack and/or bucket.

1. A camera (of course): Today, people use their phones for all their photography. For most purposes they work great, but make sure it's fully charged before leaving home & have a car-charging cable handy.

2. Some Jr. Juice? Bring some snacks & drinks to keep up your energy.

3. Spray bottle & sponge: Some cemeteries have water taps, but they may not be convenient to where you're shooting. Fill a 4L jug with clean water to top up your spray bottle. Remove bird droppings by soaking areas, sponge very gently, if not a crumbly type of stone. Rinse & repeat as needed. Take 'wet trash' home in plastic bags or a bucket.

4. Reflector: Unless you know the lighting at the site, bring along a reflector to direct sunlight across the face of darkly lit stones. A cheap, plastic full-length mirror is ideal, but you can use a piece of folded cardboard that's covered in tin foil (dull side out to reduce glare) & taped securely on the back. Windshield reflectors for cars work & fold up nicely. When sunlight is angled properly, inscriptions jump out. Your helper can 'find the sunlight' at some distance away & still maneuver the reflector to add light onto the stone. **Glad you have your buddy now?**

Sunlight can be too strong on smooth granite stones. Your helper can 'remove light' using a dark blanket or umbrella to block the sun's rays. If alone, place a blanket over your head, camera & top of the stone, for a series of detailed close-ups.

5. Garden clippers: They handle most overgrown greenery.

OK, you've packed all your supplies & now you're finally ready to take a few photos! You're there, you're prepared... so take lots of photos and double-check that you actually have well-focused shots.

Cemetery signage: For reference, especially if visiting more than 1 site.

Wide shot: Show the entire stone, in context with its surroundings.

Whole stone close-up: For upright stones, squat or kneel down to point your lens at the centre of the stone to eliminate distortion. When standing, the top becomes wider than the bottom & letters will be harder to discern. Old cameras' waist-level viewfinders were perfect for this subject; compare any old family photos with today's eye-level shots.

Close up of details: Birth/death info, epitaphs, fraternity symbols, etc.

So now let's look at some tell-tale examples...

How NOT to Photograph gravestones... cont'd

Two conditions you don't want to see when you are out photographing:

Massive overgrowth like in this 1st image. (Glad you brought snacks now?) Nice lighting though!



The 2nd photo, severe backlighting of an east-facing stone (with droppings) & no hope of reading the lettering or 'fixing it' in Photoshop.



Tight shots: They ensure 'readability' once you're back home.



Partial shadows: My helper needed to direct light under the granite stone's edge, not be in the image.



Branch shadows: Luckily, in this photo lettering is still clear.



2003



2019



2021

Things change over time, so revisit sites that you've already photographed.

Bonus Tips

Face your camera perpendicular to the stone, not slightly angled left or right.

But... with glossy stones, shoot from a slight side angle position to avoid being seen in a reflection.

When composing your shot, lots of bright sky in the background will fool your camera's light meter, resulting in a dark stone face, with illegible letters. (see photo - near left)

Enhance inscriptions on old stones, so you can get the shot. Nope! Do no harm – leave nothing behind.

Charcoal rubbings, talcum powder or shaving cream used to accentuate lettering are taboo. No vigorous brushing of older stones either, as all these approaches will permanently damage the stone, and worsen its condition for the next family or camera buff. Get professional advice or their help to restore any old stones.

Badly eroded inscriptions need good lighting technique and reflector attempts - first. But... using these previous techniques may only highlight a few lines at a time. So write down the inscription a piece at a time while you're there too. If all else fails, you can reread your notes, make a permanent written record and then share it with your local history group and use it to caption your photo.

One last hope? The least-risky, external process is to thoroughly wet the inscription face with clean water using that spray bottle you've been carrying all this time. The stone's flat portion will dry first (or can be blotted). Recessed letters will hold more moisture temporarily, appear darker, and may become more visible. Some stones are so weathered that names, dates & epitaphs will never be revealed. Accept this.

Cemeteries are sacred ground. Consider where you're stepping, respect other visitors nearby before snapping away, and if a burial service is near you, come back another day.

CONTACTS

Board of Directors

President

Lorrie Stephenson, lorrie67@gmail.com

Secretary

Brian Leslie, heirsont@gmail.com

Treasurer

Bonnie Storey, bgstorey45@gmail.com

Directors

Jackie Baldwin, Esther Meerschaut, Ted Steele,
3 board member positions TBD

Interim Directors

Marta Leardi Anderson
Shelby Wye



Committee Chairpersons

Resource Centre

Jackie Baldwin
jacquelinebaldwin11@gmail.com

Hospitality

Ann & John Brush

Program

Ted Steele, historynut@outlook.com

Newsletter

Ted Steele, 519 733-3456

Membership

\$30 CDN/U.S. per person or couple. Memberships run May 1st - April 30th, annually.
Please provide phone, postal address, email & family names you are researching.

Payments

Make cheques out to: HEIRS, 243 McAfee St., PO Box 53, Harrow ON, Canada N0R 1G0

E-transfer payments or donations to HEIRS? Send to: heirsont@gmail.com

Members research for free. Non-members using research library: \$10 per visit (+ photocopy fees)

Newsletter / Meetings

Published 9 times / year. Meetings usually held on the 4th Thursday of the month, September to June, (December excepted).
Receive full colour newsletters by email, or a B&W print version, by regular post.

Resource Centre:

Open Hours: Mondays 5:30-8PM, Tuesdays & Thursdays 10AM-3PM

Please contact us at heirsont@gmail.com or (519) 738-3700 to confirm our 'open status' prior to arrival.

519 738-3700

heirsont@gmail.com

www.HEIRS.ca